

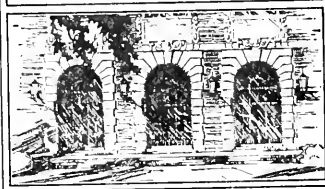


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AMERICA.

OUR NATIONAL HYMN

BY

REV. S. F. SMITH

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TO
ALL AMERICANS.



HOME OF REV. DR. S. F. SMITH.

REV. DR. S. F. SMITH.



THE FAVORITE CORNER.

SAMUEL Francis Smith, the author of our National Hymn "America," was born at the North End, Boston, under the sound of old Christ Church chimes, October 21, 1808. He attended

the Latin School, from which, in 1825, (having been a medal scholar) he entered Harvard College, in the same class with Oliver Wendell Holmes, the late Judges B. R. Curtis and G. T. Bigelow, James Freeman Clarke, and Chandler Robbins. Josiah Quincy became President of the College in their last year. George Ticknor was one of their teachers, and Charles Sumner (1830), John Lothrop Motley and Wendell Phillips (1831) were in the classes next below them. Mr. Smith passed from Cambridge to the Andover Theological Seminary, in the beautiful town of that name. This was an outgrowth of the famous Phillips Academy, at whose centenary, last summer, Dr. Holmes delivered the poem, and about which he and others have, of late

years, told such interesting stories. Professor Stuart and his early colleagues in the Seminary were then at the height of their usefulness and fame. In the class above Mr. Smith was the since renowned theologian, Professor Park; in the class that entered next, the late Professor Hackett.

Upon graduating, in 1832, Mr. Smith engaged for a year in editorial labor. He was ordained to the ministry in February, 1834, and went to Waterville, Me., preaching as pastor in the Baptist church, and becoming Professor of Modern Languages in the college there. After eight years thus spent, he moved to the village of Newton Centre, Mass., which has ever since been his home. For seven years he was editor of the "Christian Review," and for twelve years and a half, until July, 1854, he was a pastor there.

During his subsequent residence he has been occupied in general literary pursuits, and in editorial labor, largely in the service of Christian Missions, to which he has also seen a useful and honored son devote himself in India.

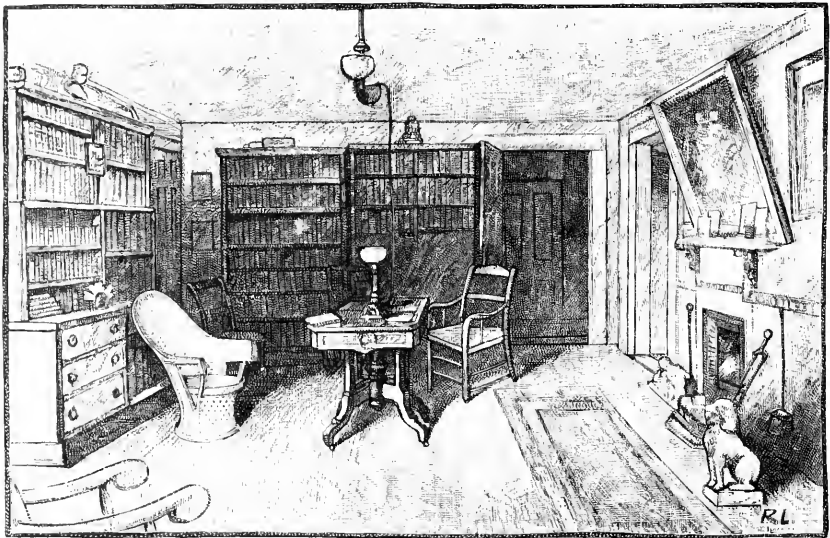
Mr. Edwin P. Whipple has observed that: "Some of the most popular and most quoted poems in our literature are purely accidental hits, and their authors are rather nettled than pleased that their other productions should be neglected while such prominence

is given to one"—instancing F. W. Parsons, and his "Lines on a Bust of Dante." It was once intimated to me by a member of Dr. Smith's family, not that the author of "America" desired prominence for other strokes of his pen, but that he was sometimes a little weary with that accorded to the one which is so often and so heartily sung. But Dr. Smith has probably settled down to his fate, with which, indeed, it would be particularly vain to strive, since the frequent occasions of using the national hymn furnished by the war have been so quickly followed by those of patriotic centenary observances. Very appropriately, too, the effort to save the Old South has enlisted our poets, drawing attention to the history of some of their

early famous poems, and thus seated these all the more firmly in popular interest.

Long will be remembered, by all who were so fortunate as to attend it, the entertainment given in those old walls on the evening of May 4th, 1877. Governor Rice presided, and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Drs. J. F. Clarke, S. F. Smith, and O. W. Holmes, the three college classmates, read and spoke on the occasion.

Dr. Smith told the story of "America." The late Mr. William C. Woodbridge, he said, brought from Germany many years ago a number of books used in schools there, containing words and music, and committed them to the late Dr. Lowell Mason, who placed



DR. SMITH'S STUDY.

them in Dr. Smith's hands, asking him to translate anything he might find worthy, or, if he preferred, to furnish original words to such of the music as might please him. It was among this collection that, on a gloomy February day in 1832, the student at Andover found its present music for the song he had there composed in that year. It may here be observed that much discussion has occurred in England, within a year, as to the origin of this air, which, in 1815, it is said, served for the national anthem in England, in Prussia and in Russia, it being superseded in the latter country only about a generation ago. "Like the English constitution," remarked the *Daily News*, "it has gone through a series of developments, and

such a history is not unbecoming in the case of a truly national air." It has sometimes been claimed that Handel composed and introduced it into England, but the researches of Chappell, and of the Germans, Fink and Chrysander, Handel's biographer, agree in ascribing the original strain to the Englishman, Henry Carey (169—1743), who has another title to fame in the authorship of "Sally in our Alley."

Before Dr. Smith fulfilled his part on the programme at the Old South entertainment, by reciting "America," he said that on returning from a year's wandering in Europe, some time since, he was asked if any country had supplanted his own in his regard. To this inquiry he read to the audience a poetical

America.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing!
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.

My native country, - thee,
Land of the noble, free -
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and tangled hills,
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake,
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by thy might,
Great God, our King.

1832-1839.

Wm. L. H.
1832-1839

reply entitled "My Native Land." It contains six stanzas, of which the following are the first and third :

We wander far o'er land and sea,
We seek the old and new,
We try the lowly and the great,
The many and the few ;
O'er states at hand and realms remote,
With curious quest we roam,
But find the fairest spot on earth
Just in our native home.

We seek for landscapes fair and grand,
Seen through sweet summer haze,
Helvetia's mountains, piled with snow,
Italia's sunset rays,
And lake, and stream, and crag, and dell,
And new and fairer flowers —
We own them rich and fair—but not
More grand, more fair than ours.

These stanzas have been given as a natural preface to a slight sketch of Dr. Smith's surroundings in the town where he dwells ; for though he speaks in them of the beauties of his whole country, yet it may well be believed that the landscape charms of Newton Centre, as well as nearly forty years of residence there, conspire to make it for him the dearest spot of the land.

The landscape tempts us out of doors, but first we will glance about the poet's home. Leaving the parlor where the books allow them to be seen at all, covered with a warm scarlet paper. The heat diffused over the house by a furnace can at any time, for comfort or delight, be re-inforced by the open fires which poets especially love for their reveries. Whoever is welcomed to the dining-room of this hospitable home will find good cheer and quaint china. The mention of the last recalls to me that in the parlor is a relic of that possessed by Charles Sumner, and given to Dr. Smith by his friend the Hon. William Claflin. When Dr. Smith alluded, in his modest way, to the attentions paid him in his visit to Washington in October,

1877, about which I had read in the papers, I could only think, "Who, if not he, should be an honored guest in the capital of the nation?"

Certainly there is no other man among us whose words are so often read and sung, east and west, north and south — thrilling all the instincts of patriotism.

The study is full of interesting objects. The large picture suspended above the open grate is a very old and beautiful painting of the Holy Family by one of the old masters — probably a Murillo — in excellent preservation. The stone lion on the right side of the grate is a carving, a foot and a half in height, brought from the steps of an idol temple in Burmah, where he stood guard in former years. On the opposite side is a reclining Buddha, of polished marble, rare and very beautiful, from the same country. On the top of the bookcase on the opposite side of the library is a small but very fine bust of Milton ;



REV. DR. S. F. SMITH

on the right, a massive elephant's tooth, and on the left, the skull of a man-eating tiger, which in his life-time was known to have feasted on the flesh of several victims. On one of the two bookcases on the intermediate side of the library is a sitting Buddha, carved in white marble. The tall, old-fashioned clock in one of the corners has been an heir-loom in the family a hundred and fifteen years. The most-used chair in the room was the property, more than a hundred years ago, of a clergyman of the northern part of Middlesex county. The

straw chair with projecting arms did service several years in the town of Rangoon in Burmah. A very beautiful slipper, of Dresden china, does duty as a pen-holder on the centre-table. Engravings cover most of the walls not hidden by the bookcases : the most interesting being *Père Hyacinthe* and *Hengstenberg*, the commentator on the *Psalms*.

This dwelling "hath a pleasant seat." It faces the east, is moderately retired from the street, and is upon an elevation gently rising for some distance, up which sweeps, in a graceful curve, the public road. Following this in its descent, and then almost to the top of a lesser acclivity, one comes to a rural church ideally situated, and forming, amid its trees, an attractive sight across the pretty vale from the northern side of

Dr. Smith's home. This view is English in its quiet grace and natural beauty.

Returning now by the road, and going on past the house again, a spacious village green is passed, and you come to another church, the one over which Dr. Smith was many years settled, fit in position to gladden an American George Herbert. It is embowered in a corner where roads cross on the broad plain from which rises, on the left of the main road we have trodden, a long and high hill. This is crowned by the buildings of the Newton Theological Institution of which the Rev. Dr. Hovey is President. One who toils up the winding tree-lined avenue will be rewarded by reaching an eminence which will bear comparison with that where was once the old Ursuline Convent of Charlestown, or with Andover's plateau and elegant shades, or the delightful crests of Amherst. On the west, the view is particularly fine. Dr. Hackett used to compare it to that from the Acropolis of Athens. On the horizon rise Monadnock and Wachusett, with many a town and village between. At your foot are the churches and a beautiful little sheet of water, which, with the mount on which we are standing, gives the situation some claim to be regarded as an American miniature "Lake District." Sailing or rowing out upon it, and looking up the height, the scene is German or Italian in its bold and romantic character. The hues in the stone of the chapel, and its architecture, embracing a heavy tower, give it, set upon the wooded hill, an air of age, and recall the castle sites on Como, or one of those still inhabited religious establishments which rise upon the banks of the Danube.

Not very far from the water is the former home of Dr. Hackett, and following west the road upon which it lies, towards Brooklawn, the country-seat of Gov. Claflin, the traveller first comes to the portal of the cemetery in which the scholar now reposes. Dr. Smith has chosen a final resting place here among the urns of this and other friends. Sure we are that none could wish for them, or for himself, a fairer spot to rest one's head upon the lap of earth. It is a good place for the dawn of the immortal morning on him

who wrote, years ago, "The morning light is breaking."

There is little, in meeting Dr. Smith, to remind one of such thoughts; but, in four years more, the famous Harvard class of "Twenty-nine" will have sung the words, "My Country, 'tis of thee," a half-century, and Dr. Holmes is beginning to speak of his own failing voice. Gently may he and his classmates fail and fade from their activities, distant yet be the day when those who knew him of whom this paper has spoken, shall stand and muse:—

Here lies who hymned America; to sing or preach,
Dante's suggestive words our question's tribute teach,
Where was "a better smith of the maternal speech?"

Since the main part of this was written, Dr. Smith's home has lost one who, for nearly forty years, was its honored and beloved inmate. Mrs. Ann W. Smith,



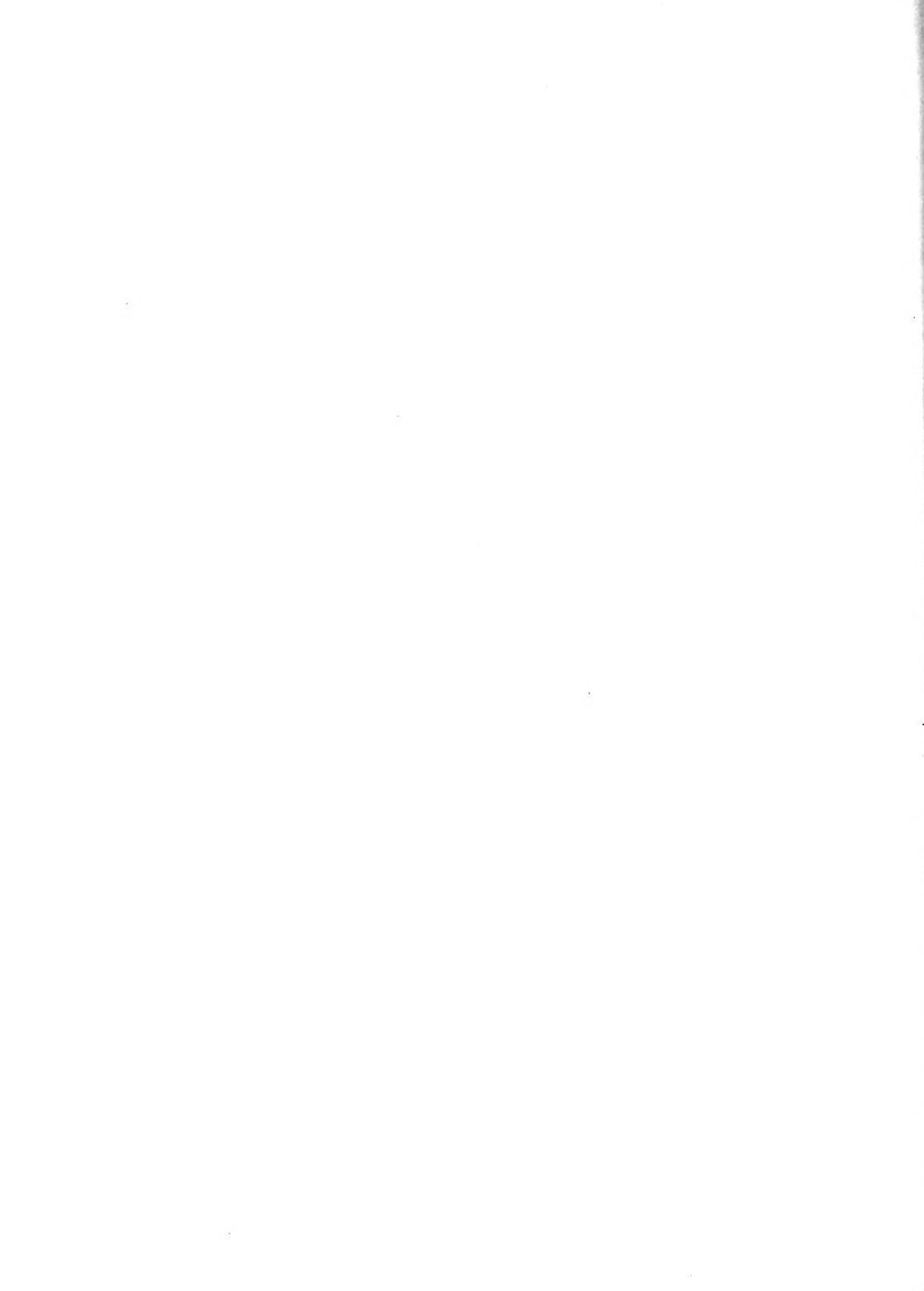
OUTSIDE THE STUDY WINDOW

the mother of his wife, died August 20th, 1878. Born July 28, 1786, a sister of the eminent judge, the late Hon. Daniel Appleton White, and married almost seventy years

since, this venerable lady carried one's thoughts back to the early days of the elder Quincy and Webster, Dana and Bryant, and Madame Patterson Bonaparte. At ninety-two, however, her interest in life was keen, and her beauty of spirit, fitly enshrined in a noble figure, looked forth from a face round, full and fair. The writer will ever remember the honor and pleasure of handing Madame Smith to breakfast, in her son-in-law's home, two months previous to her death, just before the family left Newton for their cottage by the sea. It was there, where she was accustomed to bathe with much zest, that, a few weeks later, she had a fall which soon proved fatal to the body, and freed the soul, of the aged Christian.

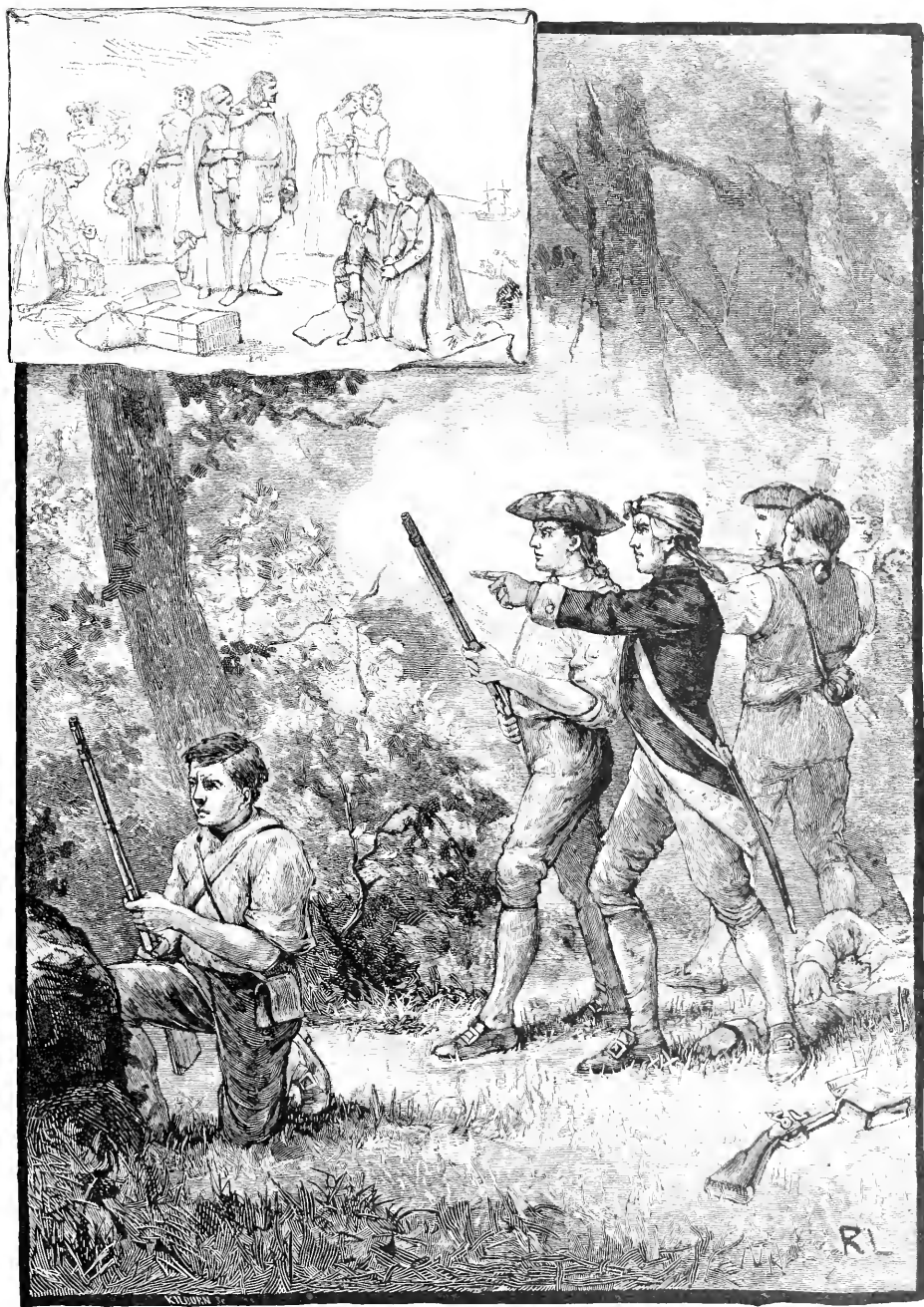
G. H. WHITEMORE.



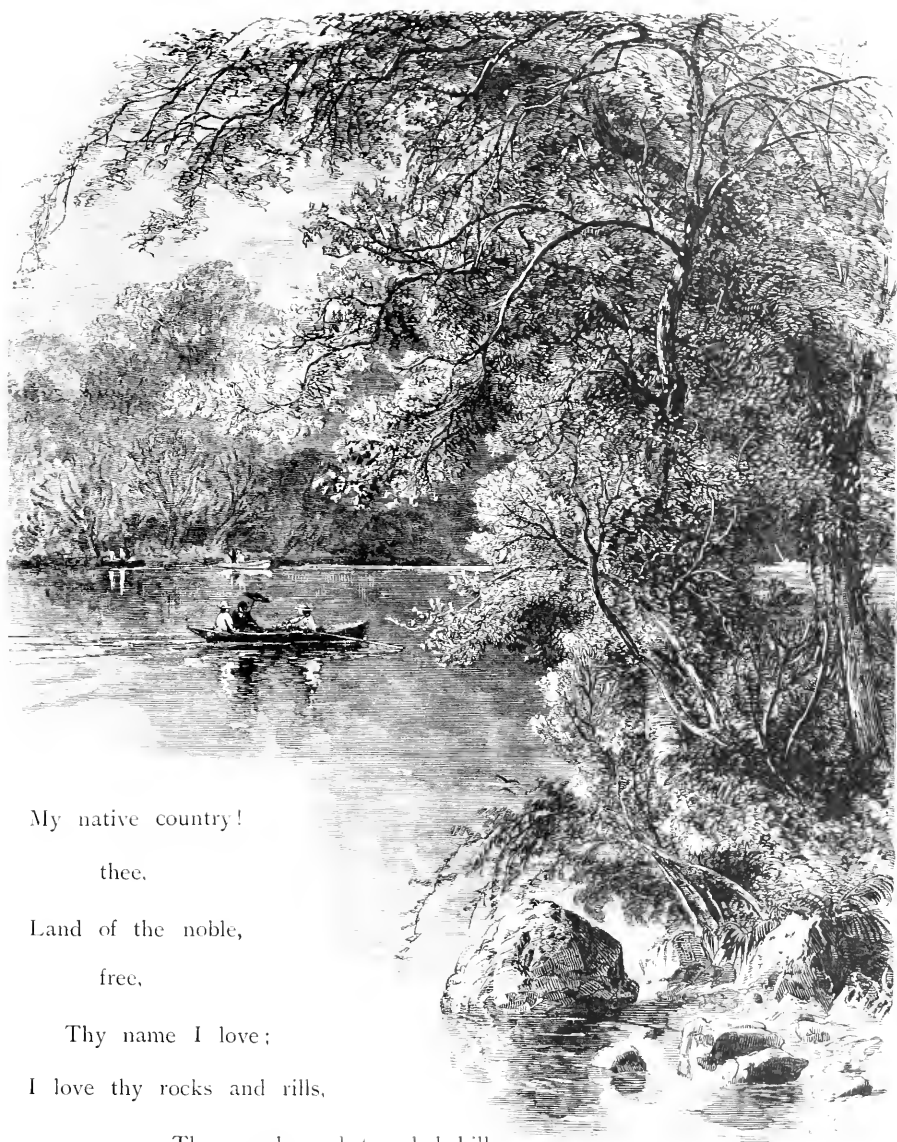




My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.



LAND WHERE MY FATHERS DIED,
LAND OF THE PILGRIMS' PRIDE.



My native country!

thee,

Land of the noble,

free,

Thy name I love;

I love thy rocks and rills,

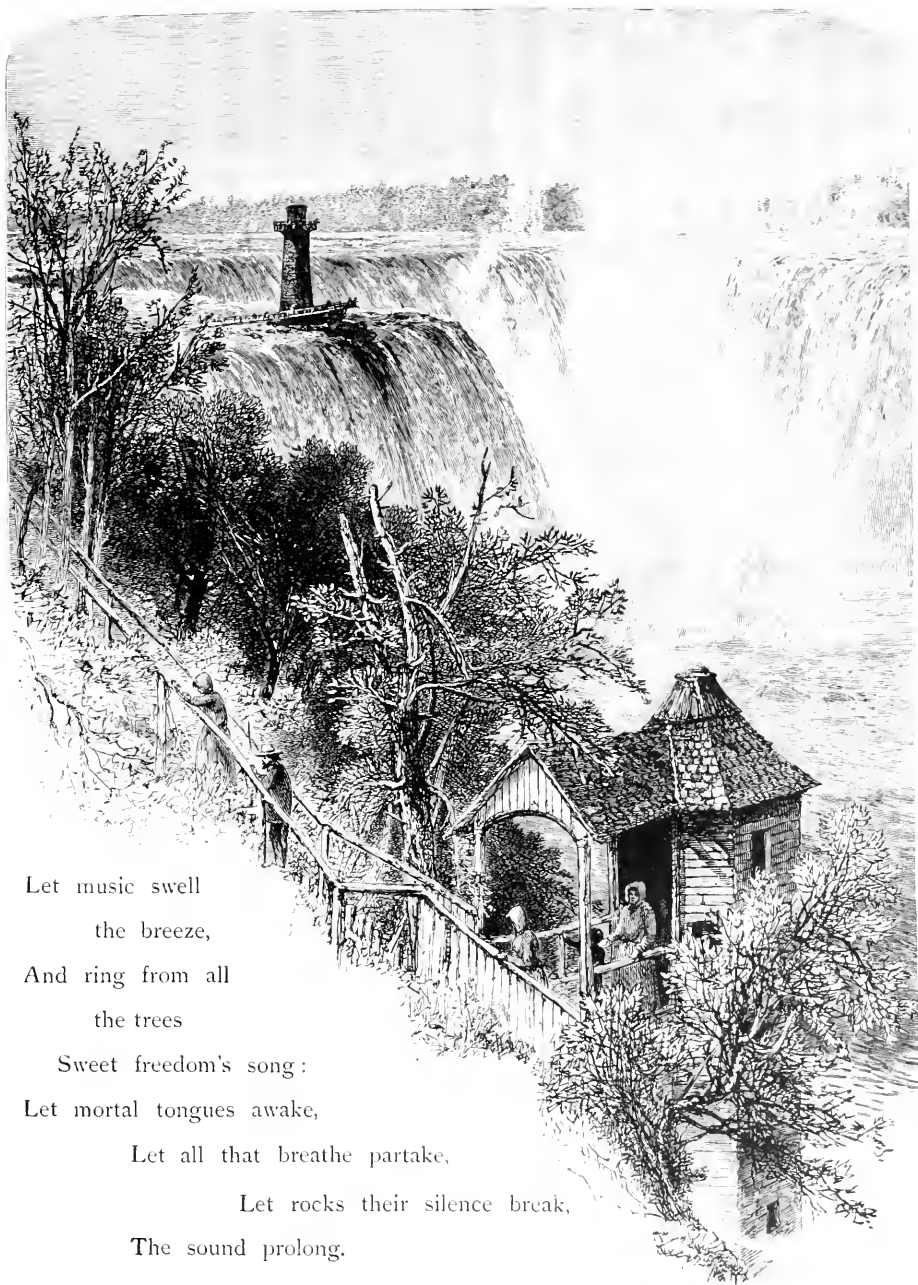
Thy woods and templed hills;

My heart with rapture thrills,

Like that above.



I LOVE THY ROCKS AND HILLS,
THY WOODS AND TEMPLED HILLS.



Let music swell
the breeze,
And ring from all
the trees

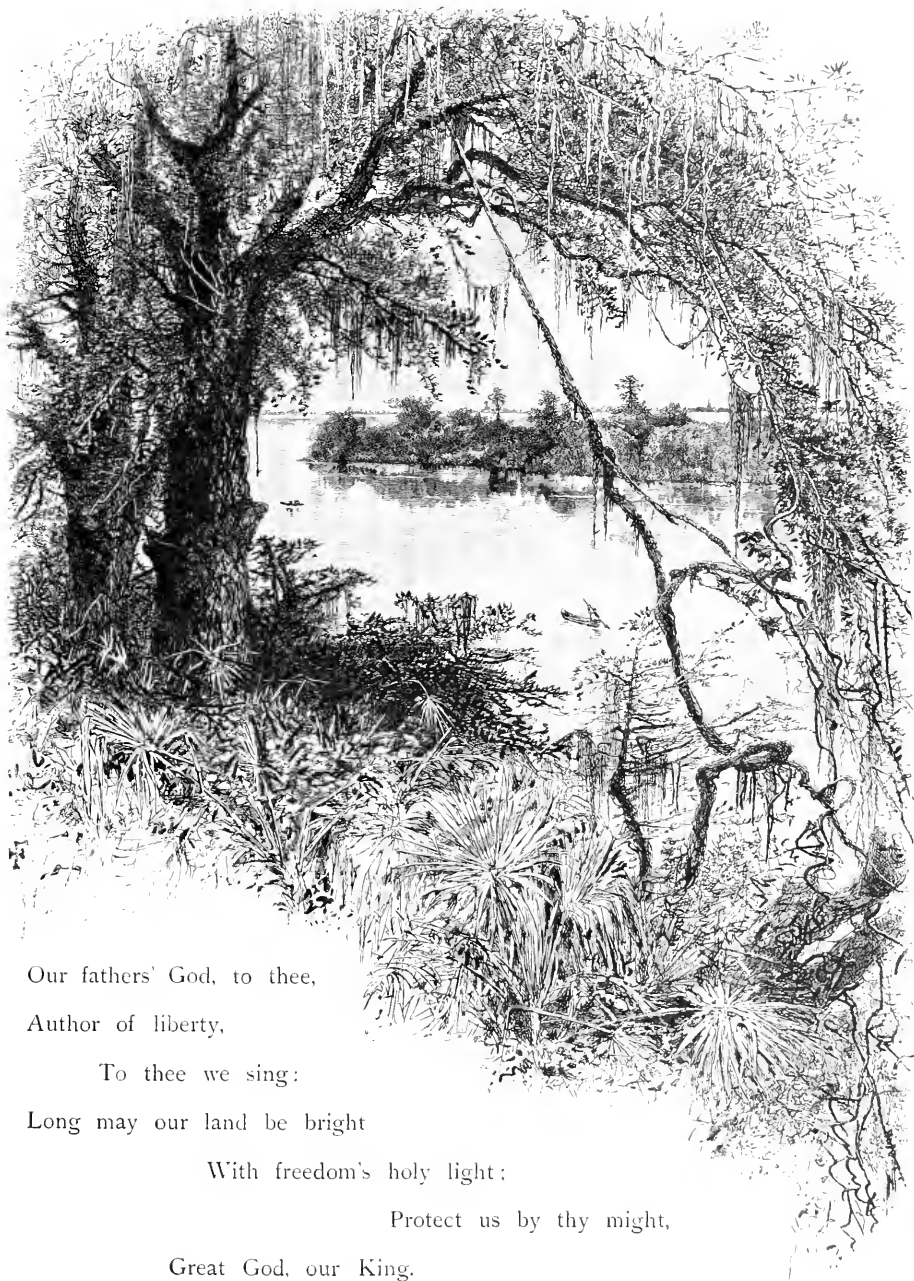
Sweet freedom's song :
Let mortal tongues awake,

Let all that breathe partake,

Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.



LET ROCKS THEIR SILENCE BREAK



Our fathers' God, to thee,

Author of liberty,

To thee we sing:

Long may our land be bright

With freedom's holy light:

Protect us by thy might,

Great God, our King.



LONG MAY OUR LAND BE FRIGHT
WITH FREEDOM'S HOLY LIGHT.



